

## SUSPENSION OF ASSESSMENT WORK ON MINING CLAIMS.

DECEMBER 13, 1920.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. RHODES, from the Committee on Mines and Mining, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany H. J. Res. 404.]

The Committee on Mines and Mining, to whom was referred H. J. Res. 404, to suspend during the year 1920 that provision of section 2324 of the Revised Statutes of the United States which requires on each mining claim located and until a patent has been issued therefor not less than \$100 worth of labor to be performed, or improvements aggregating such amount to be made during each year, have had the same under consideration and respectfully recommend that the resolution be passed without amendment.

A similar resolution (H. J. Res. 396) was submitted to the Secretary of the Interior and received his approval, as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
Washington, D. C., December 10, 1920.

HON. M. E. RHODES,  
*Chairman Committee on Mines and Mining,*  
*House of Representatives.*

MY DEAR MR. RHODES: Answering your letter of December 9, 1920, requesting report upon House joint resolution 396, "to suspend the requirements of annual assessment work on mining claims during the year 1920," I quote from my report of December 9, 1920, upon House joint resolution 368:

"During the years 1917, 1918, and 1919 similar legislation was effective, upon the representation that scarcity of labor, high cost of materials, and other conditions arising out of the war rendered relief of the mining industry essential. It was hoped that further relief would not be required, but so far as gold mining is concerned conditions of the industry are such that relief is now just as important as during the past three years. I am advised that in the mining regions labor is still hard to obtain, and that the cost of supplies and materials is such as to render the performance of the annual labor required by section 2324 of the Revised Statutes very difficult."

House joint resolution 396 is similar in language to the act of November 13, 1919, and would extend relief to mining claims in the United States, including Alaska. I recommend that this or similar legislation be adopted.

Cordially, yours,

JOHN BARTON PAYNE,  
*Secretary.*

Your committee later determined to extend the date upon which notice should be filed from December 31, 1920, as provided for in House joint resolution 396 to April 1, 1921, and ordered a reprint of the resolution as amended.

The resolution as stated by the Secretary of the Interior is a reenactment of current law. It was the hope of the committee that exemption from assessment work on mining claims would not be necessary this year. A hearing was held by the committee on May 27, 1920, but at that time no action was taken. Since adjournment of Congress in June conditions in the mining States have grown worse each day. The mining industry in the West is more depressed to-day than at any time during the past 50 years. Copper, lead, zinc, and silver have gradually decreased in price and every one of these metals is now being mined at a loss.

Producers in most instances are continuing operations in the interest of the men in the mines and the local community where business has grown up incident to the mining industry. Where mines are in operation to-day producers are facing the imperative necessity of reducing wages and cutting down the force. Gold is being mined almost uniformly at a loss, and the production of gold will be scarcely more than 50 per cent of the normal production during the last 10 years. A similar reduction will be noticed in the production of silver, zinc, lead, and copper.

The winter has come on with unusual severity in all the mountain States of the West and as early as October 1 much snow fell in the higher altitudes, and men will not go into these regions where snow is from 2 to 6 feet deep to do this work.

Reports have reached the committee that bona fide owners of claims are in such financial difficulties that they can not pay the amount of this assessment charge.

It will be understood by the House that this relief from annual assessment work this year does not relieve the owner of the prospect from meeting all the requirements of section 2324 of the Revised Statutes, which requires \$500 assessment work on each mining claim before a patent may issue. It merely extends the provisions of that requirement one additional year. It was not felt by the committee that the interests of mining would be promoted by permitting the rights of legitimate prospectors, who had in most cases done from \$100 to \$500 on each of these claims, to lapse and the whole property pass into the hands of a new claimant merely by filing upon the prospect at the beginning of the new year.

There has come to the committee a universal demand from all sections of the country for this relief. We are impressed with the emergency character of the relief asked for and believe the best interests of the country demand the immediate passage of the bill.